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# ART AND PROGRESS

VOLUME IV

MARCH 1913

NUMBER 5

## SPECIAL SCULPTURE NUMBER



STATUE AT AVIGNON. BY CHARPENTIER

## MONUMENTAL SCULPTURE

BY ROYAL CORTISSOZ

THE late Augustus Saint-Gaudens once whimsically complained of the "plant" required in the practice of his art. The mere mechanism of a sculptor's studio, he told me, made him feel as though he were presiding over the building of a huge bridge or some such complicated affair. He took immeasurable pains with everything that he did, and one of his costliest, most troublesome expedients was to move his model for a statue into the open air and there build it up so that he might get the utmost possible knowledge of its probable effect in its ultimate position. No sacrifice was too great if only he might see the thing steadily and see it whole. There lies the secret of monumental sculpture, which is a secret of design, of proportion and fitness, not of scale.

It might seem to be not a secret at all, but the most obvious kind of a truism. As a matter of fact, it has not been obvious to every sculptor who has burdened the earth with his works. Criticism, it has been said, is the result of the adventures of a soul among masterpieces. In the course of its critical adventures the soul is occasionally confronted by other things. I have been struck by this fact in the course of my wanderings amongst monuments far and wide. The qualities so plainly indispensable have been so often missed. Broadly speaking, the innumerable failures scattered over many countries are attributable to nothing more nor less than a superstitious belief in the "monumental" virtues of mere bulk. There is a glaring example in Berlin, where the great medley of archi-



MEMORIAL TO ADMIRAL FARRAGUT, NEW YORK. BY AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS AND STANFORD WHITE

ture and sculpture erected in memory of Emperor William I sprawls over a vast amount of space. It is a fretful thing, which must pretty nearly have exhausted the resources of a quarry and a bronze foundry, and it hasn't, to my mind, anything of the unified impressiveness which should belong to a public monument. Sculptors sometimes seem obsessed by this idea of scale. Even that able Belgian, Constantin Meunier, was taken in by it when he "got up" his picturesque but sadly overdone "Monument to Labor." No doubt the advocates of bulk can find precedent in the sculpture of antiquity, but it is bulk *by itself* that they have too often sought, and it has steadily betrayed them.

Simplicity provides the best key to perfect design in monumental sculpture. When the Victory of Samothrace was set up to commemorate the great sea fight off Salamis, the winged goddess was represented blowing a trumpet and bearing a naval standard; but even as we see the immortal creature on the staircase

in the Louvre to-day, headless, armless, and with her trophies gone, it is clear that she was conceived as a type of sculptural simplicity itself. She makes one grand impression. Placed anywhere this figure would exercise the spell of true monumental sculpture. Compare with it for a moment its very antithesis in sculpture, the "Perseus" of Cellini. I do not speak of matters of technique and style, where the comparison would be absurd, but of the general principle of monumental design. The Victory, even though it is, as I say, maimed, is a unit. The Florentine bronze was never seen by its sculptor as a mass and its effect is scattering. From top to bottom, not forgetting the excessively elaborated base, it is teased out of the dignity of monumental art and left a prodigiously clever but essentially trivial *tour de force*.

Great sculptural design proceeds out of a kind of inspired simplicity, and, no matter how far it is carried, preserves a perfect equilibrium. It was his fidelity



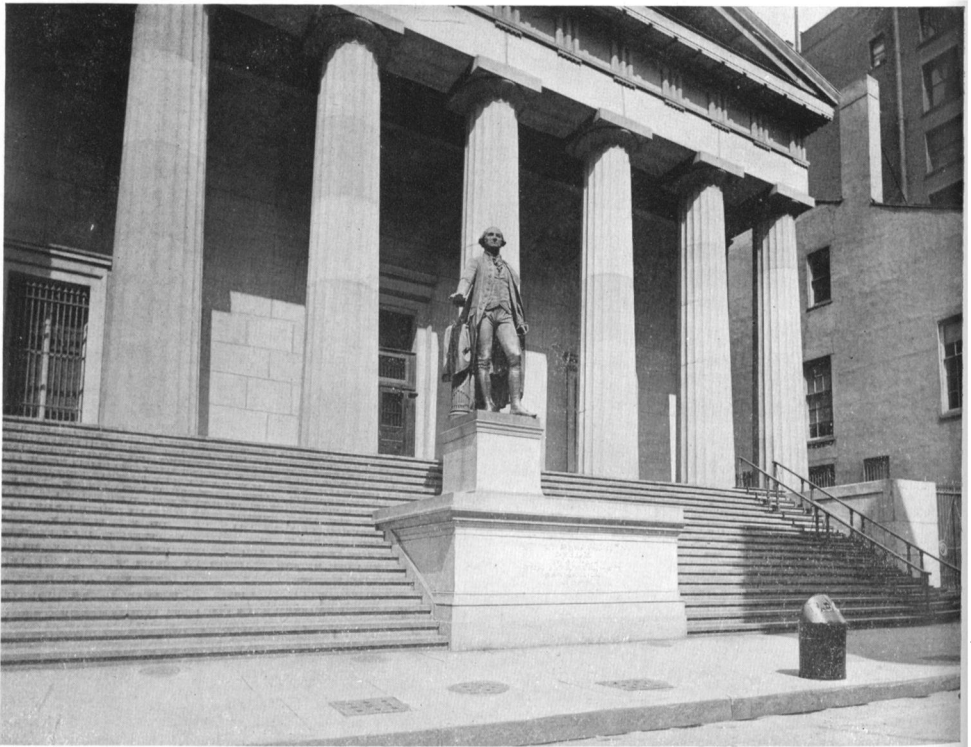
STATUE OF VILLON AT PARIS

to this law that gave Saint-Gaudens his power. Look at the standing Lincoln in Chicago, with its stately exedra. The superb figure gains enormously from the austere beauty of line which he and Stanford White developed when they came to work out the architectural setting for the statue. One wants to come to close quarters with a fine piece of sculpture, but I get a special happiness out of some famous monuments when I am far enough away from them to see them in a rich perspective. It is then that a work like the Lincoln tells or one like the Farragut, where, by the way, it is interesting to see how a pedestal far more "decorative,"

on its smaller scale, than the one at Chicago, is nevertheless kept just as carefully in hand. It does not merely bear the bronze; it is, like the bronze, part of a design. Studying that problem of design I have always found it exciting to watch the makers of the really great monuments bringing in green things and light and air, as precious ingredients in their schemes. I do not know just when or by whose instrumentality the glorious basin in front of the Villa Medici was placed at that precise spot on the Pincio, under those particular trees, but I have never been near it without thinking of the instinct for monumental effect which



MONUMENTAL FOUNTAIN, BY CARPEAUX. GARDENS OF THE OBSERVATOIRE, THE LUXEMBOURG, PARIS



STATUE OF WASHINGTON, BY J. Q. A. WARD. SUBTREASURY, NEW YORK

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MONUMENT TO LABOR. BY CONSTANTIN MEUNIER



STATUE OF NATHAN HALE. BY FREDERICK MACMONNIES. CITY HALL PARK, NEW YORK

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THE ANGEL OF DEATH STAYING THE HAND OF THE YOUNG SCULPTOR  
MILMORE MEMORIAL BY DANIEL C. FRENCH

must have determined its fate. This fountain is not to be regarded, I suppose, as a work of sculpture, in the strict sense, yet I maintain that its charm is sculptural, as is the lesson it enforces.

There is a similar lesson to be learned in Paris, in the gardens of the Observatoire, where Carpeaux's lovely group bearing the signs of the Zodiac is lifted up against the sky, between noble ranks of trees. It is a picturesque monument, if ever there was one, and at the same time it is almost classical in the reposeful simplicity which binds the whole thing together. That is what the wise sculptor drives at, whether he has an architectural or a landscape background. I had some interesting discussions with Saint-Gaudens when the question of a site for his Sherman was under consideration. He explored the available ground in a passion of anxiety and the one thing that he

was forever urging was that the monument should be in some big, quiet scene, on a site spacious enough for him to be sure of a simple background. When he has to reckon with architecture the sculptor prays for some modest arrangement of line and mass. Two statues that I know have been supremely fortunate in this respect. Ward's "Washington," on the steps of the Subtreasury in New York, has a big building behind it, but the classical style of that building envelops the bronze in a garment of calm. Rodin's "Penseur," set on the baldest of pedestals at the foot of the steps of the Pantheon, enjoys there a distinction in the mere matter of placing unapproached, I think, by any other monument in Paris.

It is odd that in France, the home of modern sculpture, where statues crop up over night, all the year round, the art of the monument should not be more gen-



erally understood. Père-Lachaise, for example, is thickly populated with shapes of dread, artistically speaking. I have in mind one of the worst of them, Mercié's monument to Paul Baudry. An important factor in it, to be sure, is the beautiful bust of the painter made by Dubois, but just above this there hovers a figure of Glory with outstretched wings, a figure whose suspension in mid-air, so to say, introduces a preposterous association of ideas; and below, leaning over the sarcophagus, there is another figure, this one of Sorrow. There are palm leaves, the artist's brush and palette are reproduced, and after fussily getting his different motives together the sculptor obligingly throws in some unattractive lettering. France is full of that sort of restless, ill-balanced stuff; much of it, to our eternal bewilderment, the work of accomplished and really distinguished men. Decidedly, that secret to which I alluded at the outset has not been unveiled in every studio. Last winter, in rambles through the French provinces, I "collected" countless monuments, and among them I had to reckon some of the vilest, in respect to design, that exist anywhere.

There were several of the good ones that set me to wondering why we didn't see more of the same sort of thing in the United States. In the delightful little park that is spread over the great rock at Avignon, beside the bleak walls of the old Palace of the Popes, there is a small pond. From a pretty rockery in the middle of this a nude by Charpentier rises, a lithe, vivid figure, as graceful in movement as in its intrinsic lines, and expressive of the very spirit of the place. There, again, I noted a felicity of design, an artist's perfect adaptation of his monument to its surroundings. I saw, too, at Nîmes, a statue to Daudet raised above a small, still body of water. It is a capital way in which to detach monumental sculpture from an atmosphere of solemnity, to keep it monumental and yet make it what one is obliged to call, for lack of a better phrase, lightly decorative. The French know a lot about that. All over the coun-

try you come upon the modest bust or figure, done with a really clever touch, to atone for the awful ponderosities, glaringly "official" in origin, which for some occult reason continue to afflict a people rich in taste.

I have a weakness for these less ambitious monuments because, in the first place, they are apt to be more successful than their colossal brethren. I would give all the pompous spectacles in Paris, like Dalou's "*Triomphe de la République*" or the "*Victor Hugo*" of Barrias for a bit of merely friendly, human characterization like the romantic "*Villon*" of Etcheto in the Square Monge. These simpler, saner solutions of the monumental problem are, among other things, more sympathetic, more naturally engaging. They make pleasanter spots in the urban panorama. I remember strolling once, years ago, in the gardens of the Villa Doria Pamphili with some friends, among them the late Charles F. McKim. We paused by an old fountain. The water murmured, the flowers drowsed in the sun, a peacock came gorgeously out upon a crumbling balustrade near at hand, and under the blandest of skies the world seemed to be a place of sheer contentment and delight. "How cheerful it all is," said Mr. McKim, smiling in a thoughtful way. I have thought of that saying of his, in the presence of some of our monumental sculptures and their backgrounds—public buildings or gardens. They are often impressive and often they are the least bit muscle-bound and portentous.

In our zeal for the beautification of cities and parks we stand up so straight that we fall backwards. We are afraid to be light and charming, to be gay, to be "cheerful." We are afraid that, in that case, we wouldn't be really monumental. So we are grand, gloomy and peculiar, instead, and make monuments that are very big, very expensive, and not, invariably, monumental. It will be a fine day for American sculpture when some sagacious committee, setting its face like flint against a full-length in bronze of the local patriot, to be set up on a mass of granite in the public square, will go



to one of our sculptors and say to him: "Put your imagination to work. Give us an image of beauty, embodying some interesting idea. Then let us consider together as to where and how it may best be placed, so that it will add to the happiness of the whole community, and you shall not fail of your reward."

P. S.—As I write these closing lines I notice in the foreign news the follow-

ing item: "M. Léon Bérard, the French Under-Secretary for Fine Arts, has at length taken action against the undue multiplication of public statues in Paris. He has decided that in future sculptors are to be encouraged to embellish public buildings in preference to congesting open spaces with monumental groups." I like that word "congesting." It is so felicitously apposite.



FOUNTAIN. PIAZZA DELLA ROCCA. VITERBO

## FOUNTAINS

BY LORADO TAFT

"SOME day we dust-coated and dust-choked toilers may learn, as have the Parisians and the Romans, the artistic uses of water in street and square. They have to bring it from mountain springs many miles away; we Chicagoans have a supply practically as bound-

less as the ocean right at our doors. To be sure we have to pump it, but why should not some portion serve us *en passant* for the refreshing of our eyes and the beautifying of our public places? We are delving deep as well as piling high, and the water could find its way